Garrison and Gervais--old Army buddies no longer

It wasn't quite the same as 26 years ago when a sergeant and a private met in Jackson Barracks shortly before World War II, but when Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison and pizza parlor operator Pershing Gervais met this time the spotlight was brighter.

There was little animosity between the towering Garrison, 52, often referred to as "the green giant," and Gervais, 53, as Garrison, acting as his own attorney, rose to question the government's star witness yesterday.

The prosecution ended its planned testimony against Garrison by calling his old Army buddy, now living in Brookhaven, Miss., in an attempt to refute defense testimony that tape recordings he secretly made were fraudulent.

The government, under the direction of U.S. Attorney Gerald Gallinghouse, introduced four secretly recorded converstaions between Gervais and Garrison to prove its contention that the DA took payoffs to protect illegal pinball gambling.

GARRISON HAS repeatedly described his relationship with Gervais as one of close friendship.

Garrison said he thought Gervais acted as a government informer because he was "jammed" and couldn't get out of it.

"I can never forget when we were privates and sergeants together in the Army," Garrison replied after queries about Gervais' testimony against him.

Although U.S. District Judge Herbert W. Christenberry cut him short several times, Garrison zeroed in on their relationship when he cross-examined Gervais:

Q—Do you remember where we first met?

A—At Jackson Barracks.

Q—Do you recall when?

A—It would have been prior to World War II.

Q—Perhaps early 1941?

A—Yes.

Q—Do you remember where we went from Jackson Barracks?

A—I recall we went to Camp Shelby, Miss.

Q—What outfit were we in?

A—The Washington Artillery of the Louisiana National Guard.

Q—What kind of relationship would you say we had in those years?

A—As related to what?

Q—You recently described our relationship as being 'acquaintances.' Would you say that when we were in the Army we were good friends?

A—My good friend was Charlie Weiss. You were a friend. We did not socialize.

GERVAIS ALSO swore he lied when he said he was lying about the secretly recorded tapes. A year ago, Gervais returned from a brief stay in Canada, claiming the government case against Garrison and others was a frameup and that he was forced to make the recordings.

He also said the whole thing was a plot ot entrap Garrison.

Yesterday, Gervais said the tapes were true recordings of conversations between him and Garrison and that he only said they weren't because he feared the district attorney would harass him if he came back home.

"Once I decided I was coming back, I had to make peace with Garrison so I wouldn't be the subject of harassment and retaliation," he said.

During cross - examination Garrison tried to create the impression his old Army buddy acted as an informer only because he was forced to do so.

Under questioning, Gervais admitted he owes the federal government $8,000 in back income taxes.

The DA apparently also tried to prove Garvais is now testifying to the authenticity of the tapes to escape prosecution on the tax rap.

"Do you feel it is unlikely you will be prosecuted by the federal government for anything?" Garrison asked.

"I do not expect to be prosecuted," Gervais responded.

A year ago, Gervais placed Gallinghouse in the unusual position of having to prove his star witness was lying in order to establish the credulity of the tapes he had made.

Gervais went to Canada after federal investigators set him up with a new identity and a soft $22,000-a-year job.

When the stocky ex-cop decided he didn't like the Canadian life, he made a sudden reappearance in New Orleans claiming he had been forced to do his old friend dirty.

Gallinghouse then took Gervais to court, and Judge Herbert Christenberry ruled Gervais had been a volunteer worker in behalf of truth and justice.